

Isolated Distort

#3
November 2014

Greetings, reader and thank you for getting your hands on this copy of Isolated Distort. Perhaps a zine this length needs no introduction or explanation but I am going to do it anyway. This issue we have a new feature that I will include in future issues: a seasonal music write up. I put this zine together around October 2014 and am writing these words on November 11 so this time we have short musings on three albums that remind me of autumn. For an interview we have Lifes, a two man hardcore bombardment who have been kind enough to put most of their music online for free so go check it out while you're reading about them. Also a show review from a middle of the woods farm show that happened quite a while ago now but I thought it was memorable enough to include. And of course reviews of all sorts of punk and metal that's come out within the last six months or so. Rather than being a negative asshole and write mean reviews for shit I don't like, I chose to only include stuff that I have enjoyed so think of it more as recommendations I guess. I am always looking for new music to review, bands to interview or visual artists to put their work in these pages so don't hesitate to write to me!

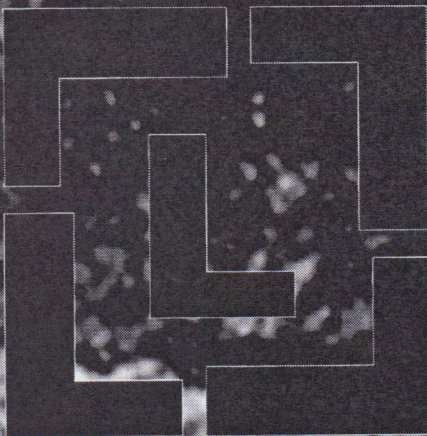
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milano(dot)nicholas@gmail.com

WHEN IT'S COLD
AND WHEN IT'S DARK



THE FREEZING MOON
CAN OBSESS YOU



Lifes breaks the mold on many levels. Rejecting the typical rock band formula, they are a simple drum and bass duo that creates abrasive, deafening hardcore that conveys explosive emotion just as well or better than any "full" band. Lifes (not lives) started sometime last year and I was lucky enough to get their demo tape sent to me for review and was immediately struck by not just the music (which was tight as fuck, especially for a demo) but the care taken in their album layout, the printing of the lyrics in a little mini-zine and everything. I could tell they were dedicated to DIY. A year or so later, they seem to be flourishing - they've made some friends and released a few split records and contributed to an awesome compilation you can read more about in the reviews section of this zine.

So for the sake of those who don't know, who are LIFES and what do they sound like?

Zak: We are a two piece, drum and bass, hardcore band from Milwaukee, WI. We have been around since the last week of 2012. We have elements of powerviolence, but really are just a hardcore band. Lots of layers of noise and dual vocals keeps us both pretty busy.

Dave: I (Dave) play bass & Zak plays drums. We both sing.

You guys have released a good amount of material since I last heard from you so give me a summary of the last year or so.

Z: We released our demo in April of 2013 and then recorded for a few split 7 inches that fall. Most, but not all of that recording session has been released as two different splits. The first was released as a split 7 inch with Short Walk (also from Milwaukee). The other was released as a split 7 inch with Double Me (from Italy). The remaining tracks from that session will be released in early 2015 as a split 7 inch with Suffering Mind (from Poland). We also recorded the track Bitter Cold for the Bitter Cold Compilation 7 inch which was released this summer.

This last year we have played some really great shows and fests. Suppression, Two Piece Fest, Iron Lung, World Downfall Fest, Permanent Ruin, Capitalist Casualties, Shitstorm, a generator show in the woods with Test from Brazil, Despise You, and Rakta from Brazil. We've been really lucky!

D: Later this fall we are venturing out of our little safe zone and playing a few shows in Minnesota. It doesn't sound like much for your average band, but for two dads to get away for the weekend, it takes a lot of planning.

You guys seem proud of the fact that you are a two piece. Are you dedicated to that set up or have you considered adding other members?

Z: We talked about the possibility of adding other members a little bit here and there at the beginning. But I think we are pretty set on keeping LIFES as a two piece. It makes it easier for our busy schedules and we are now pretty set with how our sound is. I have personally entertained the idea of having guest vocals or maybe a guest guitar track on a song or two, but I don't know if that'll ever happen. We have a lot of ideas to keep LIFES sounding interesting and weird. I guess we'll see where it goes. For now, we are happy with the way we have things setup.



D: I love two piece bands. It gives you so much flexibility from when to practice down to how a song is played. With only one other member, we can make changes to a song on the fly or if someone fucks up, the other member can make a correction without 2 or 3 other people getting lost in the process. I have no real plans of adding members to LIFES, but if we did, I would want to go all out and add at least 5 more members. Two singers, two guitar players, someone who can just focus on noise... I love big bands, but I can't imagine all the headaches that must go into it.

Tell me about your bass and rig and how one can make a bass and drum band sound nice and full.

D: I play an 8 string bass. It is tuned the same as a 4 string bass, but for every string, there is also a correlating string that is tuned an octave higher. So, essentially I am playing bass and guitar at the same time. That might be cheating a bit for some drum & bass purists, but oh well. I've been playing bass for over twenty years and this is something different. Plus, I am a bit of a gear nerd, so this new instrument can keep me on my quest of unique vintage instruments. Before LIFES had celebrated our one year anniversary, I had already accumulated three 8 string basses.

When we play live, I play out of three amps. One with a standard distorted bass tone, one with a more distorted tone and the third is used for noise & vocal effects. Besides distortion, I don't use any other effects on my bass.

Z: From my standpoint, as a drummer playing with only a bass, I feel like Dave does a great job of filling up the space where a guitar normally would be with a lot of noise and distortion. I like having just one other instrument, besides vocals, because it allows me to approach music in a different way where normally I might not fill up a section of a song with too many drums, but now am looking for how to fill up space with more intricate or more interesting parts. I have a lot of fun thinking about what I should play instead of just a straight rhythm.

What was your initial motivation to start LIFES?

Z: Dave approached me in December 2012 because both of our bands at that time were slowing down a little. So he talked to me about how we had very similar schedules (we both have families and busy lives with work and me with school as well). Practicing once or twice a month, late at night on Fridays, really works well for both of us. Kids are asleep. We don't get out to as many shows as we used to. It was also part of the motivation to keep LIFES a two piece. Not a ton of people in Milwaukee have our kind of schedule. Personally, I was also missing playing in a hardcore band. It had been a couple of years. The band I was in at the time was a little more straight up punk rock. So, I was kind of itching to play heavier, faster music again. It all just seemed to fit into place. Plus, we had known each other for years and had played together in Party By The Slice. So, it all just seemed natural to start LIFES.



D: In the fall of 2012, I realized that Get Rad wasn't going to be able to continue as a functional band that practiced every week. Our drummer got a new job so our schedules just didn't work anymore. From Halloween until Christmas of that year, I didn't have an active band and I was freaking out. I hadn't been in that position since I was in Jr High and I didn't like it. I felt lost and the only way out was to just write music. I wrote a couple of riffs and those turned into songs and luckily enough Zak was into the idea of doing another band. I didn't think he would have the time because his daughter was still an infant, but we made it work. He's the ideal drummer for a two piece band. He can play a wide variety of styles and can sing while he's doing it!

I'm really curious about the lyrics to the song "Martha". Is this a movement I've never heard about?

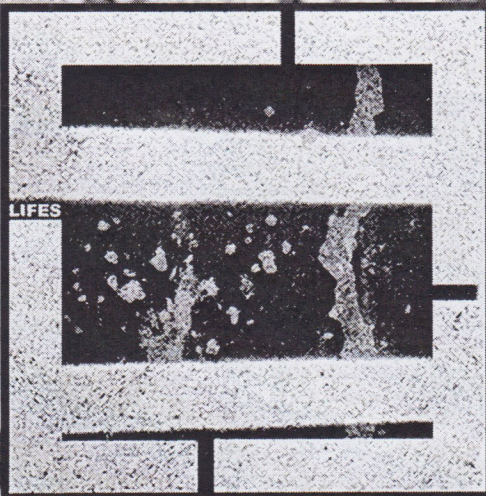
D: The lyrics to the song "Martha" came to me while driving home from work listening to a TED talk by a guy named Stuart Brand on NPR. The talk was about how with modern DNA knowledge & technology, we might be able to bring back extinct animals of the past. The Martha that the song is named after was the last passenger pigeon who died in captivity in the Cincinnati Zoo just over 100 years ago. Using the preserved DNA along with modern relatives, he theorizes that we may see the de-extinction of several species including the passenger pigeon, dodo bird, woolly mammoth and others. The song isn't for or against it, but rather how fucking insane it seems. The modern world is a sci-fi novel.



I am really into this Bitter Cold compilation of you guys and other bands from the Midwest. What's your neck of the woods like, both the DIY scene and the atmosphere in general?

Z: I think Milwaukee and the Midwest is great! It always has been in my opinion. Cities are fairly close to each other so everyone knows each other pretty well. There's a great range of bands and a great range of ages from young to old. I really love the Midwest. There have been better moments than others, but for the most part there has always been something happening here. Milwaukee has had a core group of people putting on shows for the past decade or so. There's a good range of venues from basements to bars to clubs. We have a couple of great recording studios/sound engineers that are essential to supporting and documenting our scene. There are lots of artists and screen printers that also help. We are also close to Chicago, Madison, Appleton, and Minneapolis, which all have great active scenes that are supportive so there is a lot of crossover in regard to shows and friends. All in all I love Milwaukee and the Midwest!

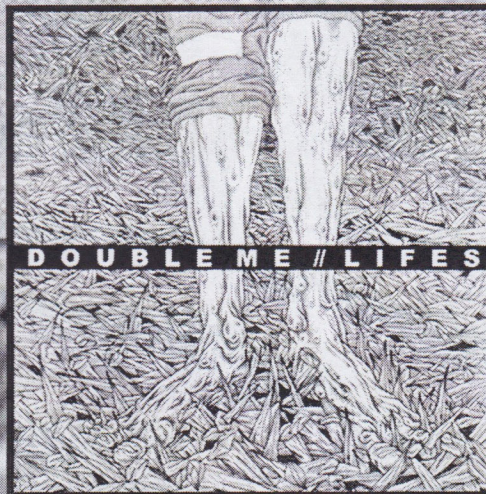
D: I love regional comps and we are fortunate that the midwest is kicking ass right now with fastcore, powerviolence, grind... With the number of killer midwest bands right now, the comp could have easily filled a 12" without sacrificing quality.



What kind of music are you into aside from the style you play in LIFES?

Z: Clearly we are influenced by many different styles of hardcore. We have always talked about how much we loved the 90s. We don't want to rehash the past, but there was something about the 90s hardcore scene where bands could sound however they liked and it was still hardcore. People were creating really unique sounding bands that weren't trying to sound like they were going for a specific style of hardcore. I think that's what we both were into a lot and what has influenced LIFES a ton.

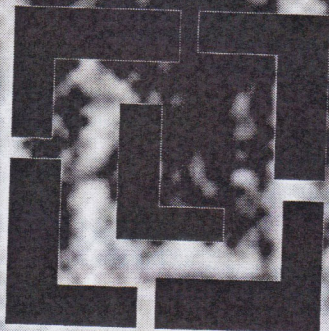
Outside of the hardcore realm, I listen to a lot of different music. My drumming abilities began in bebop. I do like a lot of jazz. I grew up with parents who listened to the Kinks, Black Sabbath, and the Scorpions so that indirectly influenced me. I really like a lot of goth and new wave and Britpop from the 80s and 90s. I used to go to a lot of industrial shows too. So, I'm sure that had some influence on me. I listen to a lot more metal now than I ever did in the past. But lately I'm just into whatever sounds new and fresh. Something a little different. And though I have always loved the Midwest and a lot of what comes out of the US in general, I really try to keep up with the amazing underground scenes all over the world. There are so many interesting and great sounding bands out there. That's one reason I do like the internet!

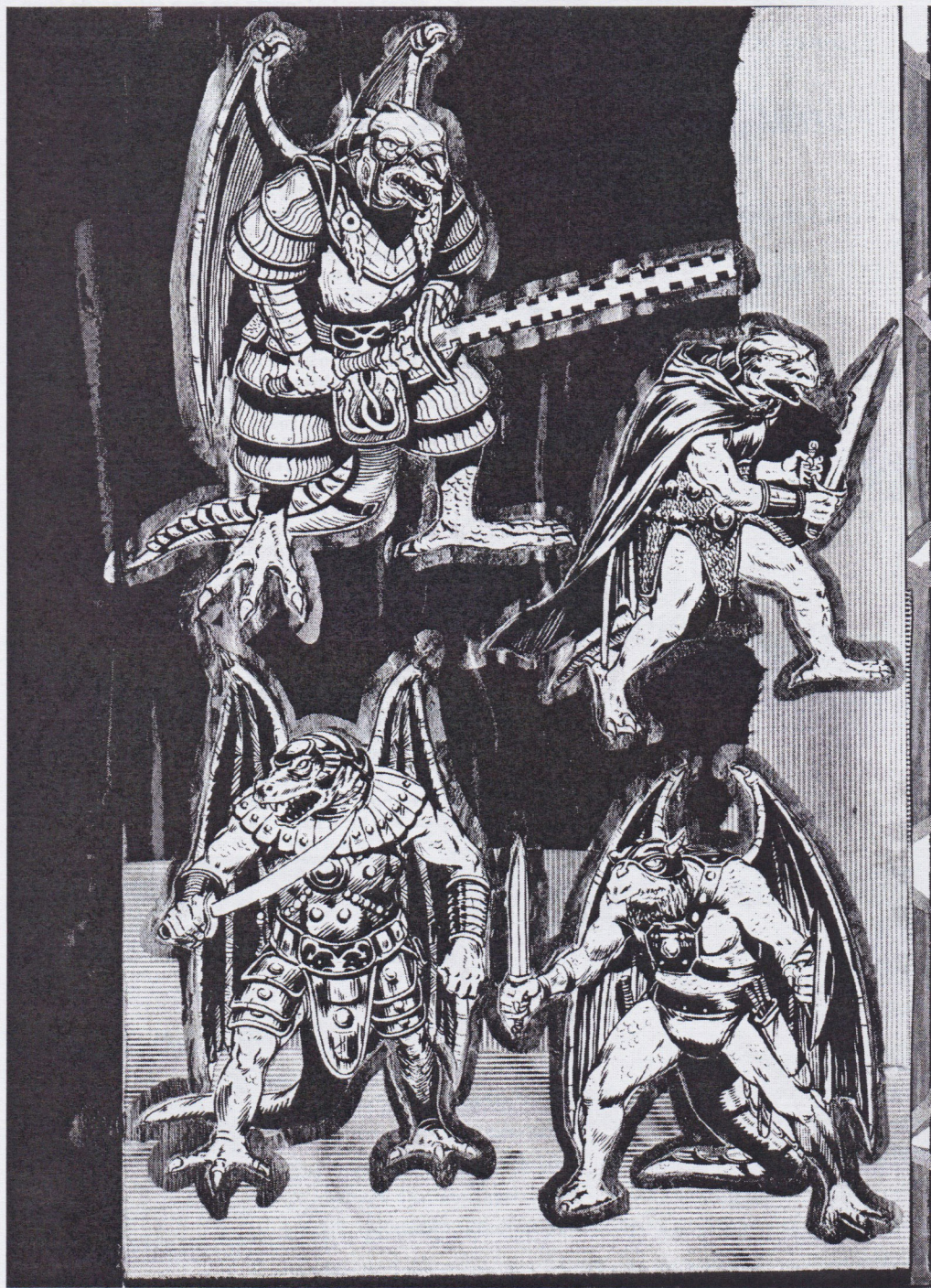


D: While Zak is looking for new stuff, the music that strikes me most is the music of my youth or newer bands that remind me of it. Lately I have been on a huge, midwestern emo of the mid to late 90's kick. Expect a lot of clean, off key singing in the new LIFES material.

What's the future for LIFES?

Z: More releases, more shows, more out of state shows, more kids?







Cress Appalachian Terror Unit Gorcrow Bexhill Last World

July 6 @ Dead End Farm,
Northfield Vermont

photos by chris
words by nick

While the temperatures drop around me, I find myself thinking back to a warm and memorable night this summer: the

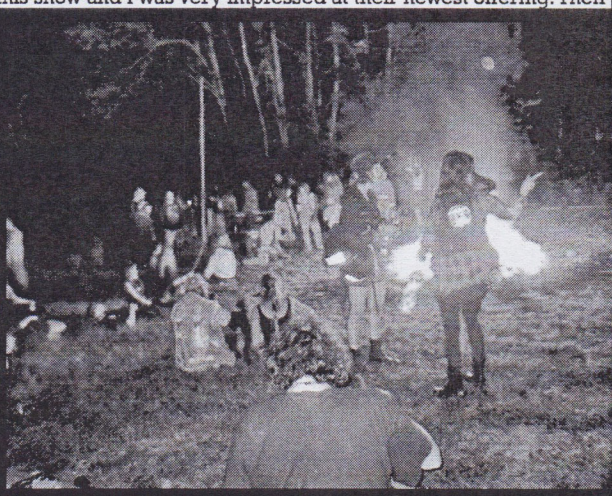
annual all night rager at Dead End Farm. I'm not sure how long this yearly punk crust n metal shindig has been going on, but I had an entertaining and very unique time last year (which was my first time there) and was highly anticipating this year's show. Last year was mostly local bands from the surrounding three or four states but this year the show lined up with a pretty sweet tour: old school anarchist d-beaters Cress, who came all the way from England for their first ever tour of the US, and West Virginia's crust warriors Appalachian Terror Unit backed up by Last World, Bexhill and Gorcrow who are all from VT. While all the bands that played were wonderful and the people were friendly and ready to go hard, the venue itself was really the highlight of the show - especially considering I only saw three bands.

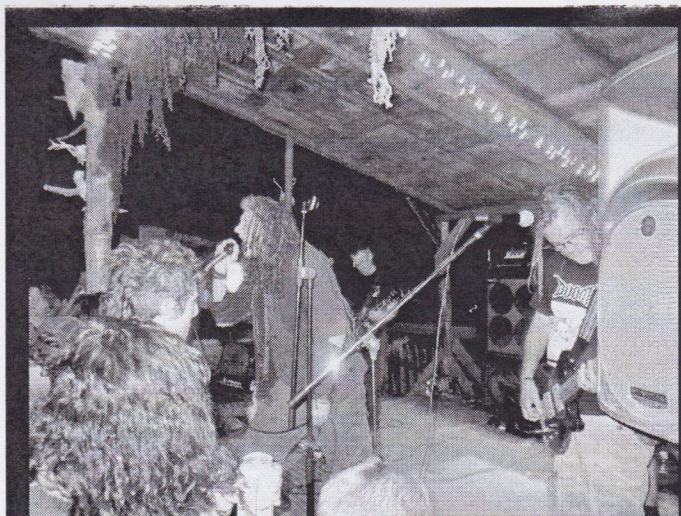
Driving from any one town to any other town in Vermont brings you around mountain curves and over rivers, so the ride to the farm was confusing but picturesque. Finally arriving in town, the farm was located far down a dirt road with few houses on it. Maybe half a mile down this road we saw the massive line of cars and tour vans that told us we'd found the place. A short walk past some chickens and down a fire lit path through woods, we came to a clearing that housed the show. I'm terrible at guessing how many people are in a crowd but I met a ton of people that night and still didn't recognize anyone. Maybe like 200 people? A generator hummed in the distance. A covered stage was set up, the columns adorned with animal bones and antlers. Straight back from the stage, but with plenty of room for a crowd to build up there, was a bonfire that grew in size as the night went on. An unattended dog spent the entire night by that fire jumping up to bite flying bits of ember, trying again and again to snatch one up even after a thousand failures. Arriving after the festivities had commenced, there was already music booming

as I approached the show area. I was quickly met with beers to drink and bowls to smoke.

Hadn't seen Gorcrow in forever prior to this show and I was very impressed at their newest offering. Their new songs were epic and had some new vibes to them. I sat on a log by the fire and jammed out to the remainder of their set. When they were not galloping and blasting and making dreads in the audience flail wildly, Gorcrow was spacing us all out with massive tripped out metal. They are truly a beast of a live band, incredibly loud and deep. Their guitarist had a slew of pedals and gadgets that sometimes made his sound enormous and crunchy for like a chugged out thrash part and other times reverberated into the cosmos to the point where you lose track of time and space and get totally engulfed by the sound.

All the bands took forever to set up which was perfectly fine with me since I was meeting all sorts of colorful characters from friendly train hoppin dudes with sad stories to badass older





older punx to douchey college drug enthusiasts. I noticed something strange as Cress was getting their shit together though: no drum set? My friend and I joked that they were just going to have a drum machine or a DJ or something. We laughed but ending up learning from our other more informed friend that Cress has always been and will always be backed up by a drum machine. I loved the band more after learning this. I imagined them in the 80's with all these heavy songs and hard hitting lyrics written but no drummer and eventually they were just like "fuck this, let's do it anyway!" That is DIY as fuck and seeing as I had a failed attempt at a one man band with fake drums, they gained my respect - although they had already gained it by being middle aged dudes who were still preaching radical politics and communal respect and playing a show in the middle of nowhere thousands of miles from their homes.

I was surprised to see how many people knew the words to the first couple songs Cress blasted out. I slammed around and enjoyed every minute of their jams, which are comparable to anarcho stuff from England in the 80s like Doom, Conflict and of course Crass. Several songs were dedicated to all the dogs in the crowd. The guitarist began the set with demands for us to rock out with no shoes on ("take off your combat boots!") and by the end of it he was fully encouraging streaking in the pit ("fucking get naked!") though I didn't see it happen. The fake drums were never an issue. If anything, they made Cress louder than the other bands. Most of their music was a d-beat and pogo punk attack, but it occasionally got into heavier and jammier sections. Almost psychedelic at some points or was I too high? Anyway, it's always a treat to see bands that were around way back when and it's even more a treat when those reunions aren't a part of giant tours or big festival stages but at a cheap BYOB gig at some farm. They also brought along a projector, which was shined onto a big white tour van. A visual element accompanied their set -



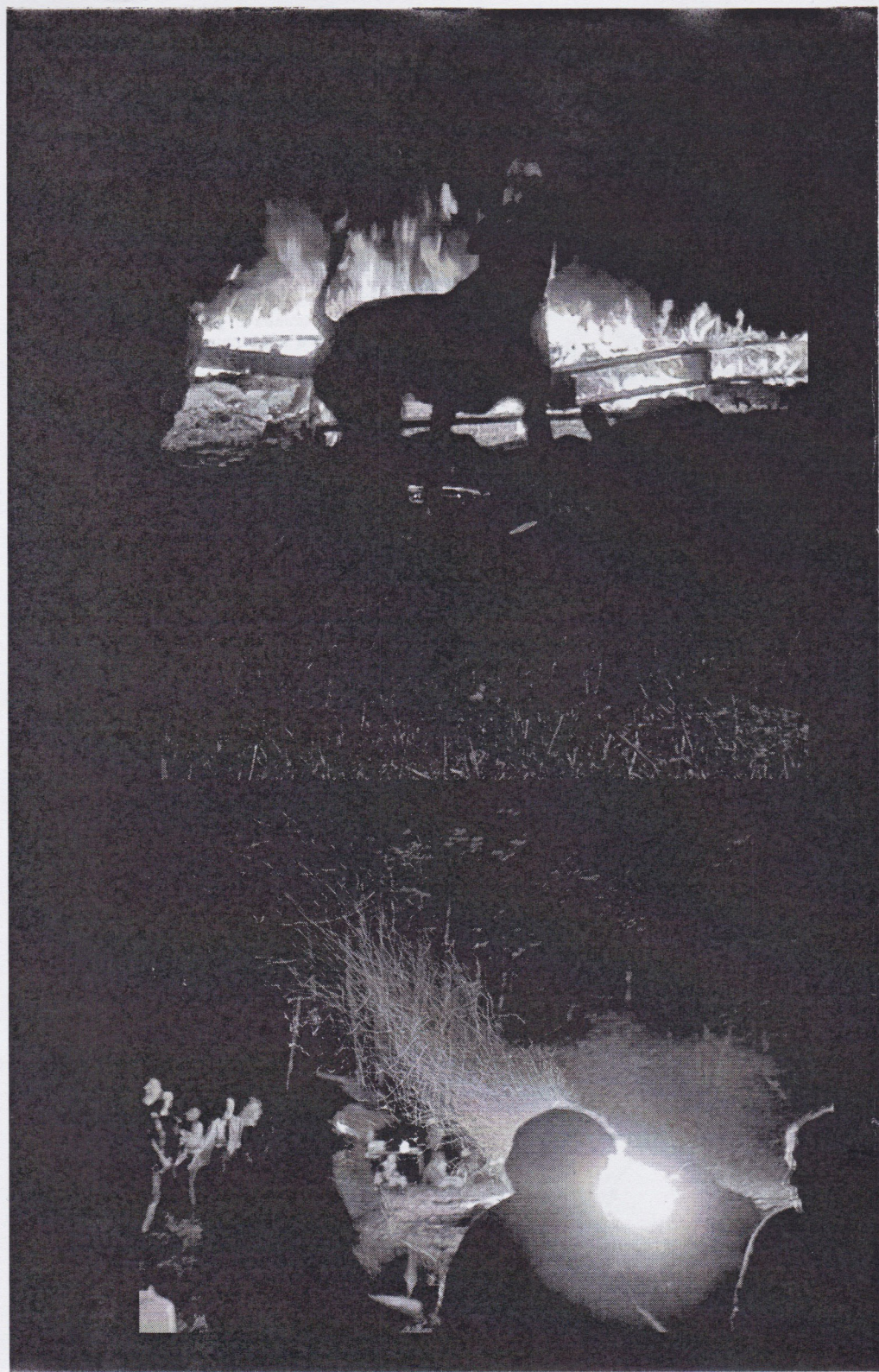


grainy footage of tear gas, riot gear, IED explosions and gunfire. I never noticed the projector video repeating itself either, which is kind of impressive since they had to have played for about an hour.

Appalachian Terror Unit closed the show. What a perfect place to see this band. Even though the vocals were not quite loud and clear enough to hear every word, ATU's lyrics ran through my head as their singer's crusty screams deviated into spoken word. I think that when it comes to "political" punk, (which is a stupid thing to call it cause it's not like they're singing about CNN or who to vote for) or peace punk or whatever that the honesty and legitimacy is either there or not and it is always easy to tell. And Appalachian Terror Unit are both legit and fuckin' raging. The pit was bumpin' and thrashin'. Positivity on the mic between songs. They shredded into the night.

After the music concluded, the party went on until long after I had gone to sleep. We hung around the fire for a bit, talking to a Lakota woman who told us her adopted parents tried to scrub the brown out of her skin as a child but that we were all one with each other. We cooked corn tortillas over the fire but it was four AM and we were tired and drunk n high and we dropped some in the fire and the Cress guys made fun of us. I heard one of them complaining about having to babysit the other because he was tripping on something or other. "It's every bloody noyt of tour, man!" he was saying in a thick english accent. On the walk back to the tent we nearly tripped over a guy in a sleeping bag who had set up nowhere in particular in the middle of the woods. In the morning we woke up, saw some turkeys and a friendly old farmer with a beard who gave us a sympathetic smile and said something like "you guys have fun?", knowing that we were dehydrated, dead fucking tired and about to be late for work.

Looking forward to next year!





AUTUMN MUSICK

As summer breaths its last breath, days slowly become shorter and refreshing breezes turn into freezing winds. In rural new england, it is impossible to think of this time of year without considering the harvest. Crops of all shapes, shades and heights that have stretched upward for months are finally picked, pulled and consumed. To some of those reading this, autumn means going back to school for the fall semester and to others this season means harvesting their year's work to gather the food and/or cash necessary to make it through the coming freeze. Study hard and chop your wood or hustle to pay for fuel. Those circumstances make fall feel reflective, contemplative and a time for planning and preparing but still a hospitable period outside.

With these themes in mind, here are some albums that sound like shades of brown and orange, animal bones found on the forest floor and bonfires on nights that grow colder with each passing moon.



Burzum
Filosofem
1996

As a mighty oak or ash tree dies, it changes from a lush and vibrant living being into a decrepit and withered thing that seems as if it will never live again. That stripped bare skeletal structure is mirrored in the ultra lo-fi, minimalist and simplistic *Filosofem*. The perfect album for evening walks in the forest while the leaves are in their death throws.

While the first two Burzum albums were lead by blasting and beats borrowed from death metal and punk, *Filosofem* keeps things relaxed and lets the songs

breath, rarely utilizing the blast beat and even tremolo picking less (at least compared to the albums before and after this one). The simplicity in songwriting is still there though, just expressed in a different way. Much of the guitar work is more eerily melodic, lots of creeping arpeggios and hard to pin down chords. The harsh recording and guitar tone, however, hide any hint of melody under waves and waves of static fuzz and distortion, sometimes only allowing you to get the gist of the song rather than clearly hearing each individual note. More and more listens will reveal more and more subtleties that go unnoticed the first time around, just as an orange-leafed hillside can look like an impassable maze until you climb inside of it and discover its hidden intricacies. If you were to jump into the middle of a song on *Filosofem*, it would sound almost unlistenable but after getting dirt under your fingernails digging through the black fuzz, the atmosphere and emotion created here is remarkable. The story is that the guitar on this album was played through a stereo and a fuzz peddle rather than through an amp and the vocals were screamed through a headset mic, giving it the tone of someone yelling over the telephone and distorting their voice by overpowering the mic. Ultra lo fi.

The songs are not at all rushed and the whole album is well paced. It's not the raging, anti-life teenage black metal of the first self-titled record. That record is for summer time. This is more introspective, not an attack. "Dunkleheit" is a superb opening track and a great introduction to how the rest of the songs are going to play out. and of course, Burzum's hit single. As I've grown more accustomed to the album, that first ringing chord of that first song can instantly bring me into the mental space created by *Filosofem*.

The pagan themes of the songs lend well to the natural autumn vibes coming from the album. Many of the songs are a celebration of old myth or admiration of the natural world in general, although the lyrics are not really understandable which adds to the mysterious aura. (Pick naps)



Hellbastard
Heading For Internal Darkness
 1988

One's experience with an album usually begins with the record cover and this one has fall all over it - a photo-realistic full color drawing of a close up of all the ethereal intricacies of the forest floor. The reproduction in this zine does not do it justice. While every band ever has tried to fill their album cover with something catchy, sensory overloading or brutal, Hellbastard instead choose to depict a sight you don't often take note of. The view under your feet and the tiny subtleties of twigs and leaves.

The album shares some similarities Amebix style early crust but with much more of a metallic leaning. This was 1988 so early death metal and grind were solidifying and that early influence can be heard from Hellbastard, but through an apocalyptic crust punk filter. The moody and creeping cleaner chord parts of those old crust bands is still there but there is also a death metal tinge to the band. Not brutal death metal but kinda groovy heavy riffing mixed with like, NAUSEA. The very first track on the album is a great example of those two feelings intersecting. The opening riff is clean and pretty, backed by a very 80s synth sound, rising to a breaking point. It builds into a chugging head bang then with no announcement except a few tight cymbal punches, breaks into hardcore thrashing. After that, there are a few mellow breaks but mostly Hellbastard are ripping shit. Lots of extended riffing, with each riff being built on and beaten to death. It comes as no surprise that Hellbastard appeared early on in the Earache Records discography alongside Napalm Death, Entombed, Carcass (although they share little musical similarities) and other bands that were shaping and blending the world of metal and punk music.

Much of Hellbastard's lyrics, on this album and others, are social critiques and cover interesting topics at interesting angles. The song "Pylons" discusses the differences in the old world and new, speaking locally about their homeland of England:

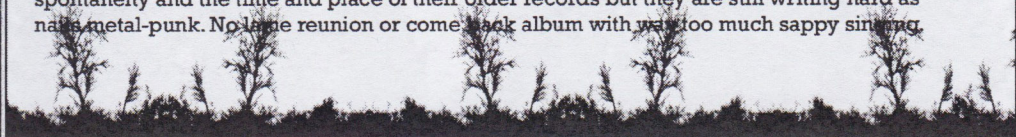
The secret of these hills was stone
 Of that stone made and crumbling roads
 That turned on sudden hidden villages

The lyricist evokes stone age man in his home country, the builders of Stronehenge and a people who mined stone, built roads and homes in a pre-industrial world. The stone that was the center of that culture was the same stone that creates the garbage of modern civilization: the stone "turning on sudden hidden villages". The juxtaposition continues:

Now over these small hills they have concrete
 That trails black wire, pylons, those pillars
 Bare like nude giant girls that have no secret

Instead of mighty stones standing in the ground as a reminder of the magnitude of the universe and human accomplishment, the songwriter now only sees telephone poles looking over the english hills. Most of the songs take a similarly thought provoking route.

Its also notable that Hellbastard still rules! Their newer stuff could never recreate the spontaneity and the time and place of their older records but they are still writing hard as nails metal-punk. No lame reunion or come back album with way too much sappy singing.



Drudkh
Autumn Aurora
2004



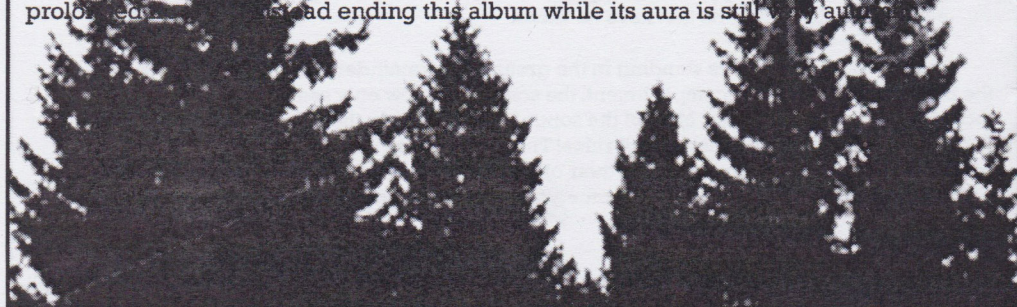
This was an obvious choice for autumn listening since it is a concept album about the season itself. Drudkh are a fairly layered and elaborate black metal band from Ukraine. I believe some of the Hate Forest people are involved. Their music often covers natural topics as well as various ancient mythologies and generally blackened subject matter, although I don't think lyrics have ever been published so the substance of their music has to be inferred from song titles and album artwork. Style over substance, which means that style *is* the substance. I also do not understand how their band name is pronounced.

This album takes the opposite approach to creating a feeling of fall than the Burzum record I was just talking about. While those songs went for a thin and gaunt vibe which sounds like being inside the dying forest, Drudkh have created a full and thick album with softer, warmer tones that sounds more like the soft yellow and auburn sides of mountains in late October or thick brown fields of corn stalks.

The album opens with a cautious musical awakening and steadily builds. This is sort of lo-fi but not at all in a Norwegian raw tape fuzz kind of way. Not too modern either, still sounds like real instruments. The melodies are easy to make out and the whole thing feels almost theatric - more like an orchestration, like there could be a primal Stravinsky-esque ballet performed to the music. The vocals know their place and only come in to really accent parts that deserve it. There is absolutely no formula here, each song gives off a very different feeling and could not be mistaken for a different one.

If there is a climax, it is "Sunwheel" - an uplifting song that manages to sound triumphant and even joyous at points while still being 100% blackened. The main riff to the song, or at least one that comes in several times and in several variations, reflects the nature of the song's title. It's difficult to describe how a piece of music can sound like a spinning wheel, but there is a definite cyclical feeling to that piece of the song. Definitely celebratory, probably alluding to fall festivals or harvest. By the time the guitar solo comes along, you can almost feel the invincible sun's warmth on your face, but you are faced with the reality that he is soon leaving.

The album can be thought of chronologically, with the first song "Fading" being the gradual end of summer and "The Glare of Autumn" as the highpoint of the season. *Autumn Aurora* closes as does the season it is named for - with "The First Snow", a sizeable song that takes its time to build mood just as the first flakes of winter grace the ground. It is a song with very little percussion, instead letting the melodic melody of the snowfall overtake your senses. The final minutes of the album are introspected and ominous, giving just a glimpse of the inevitably coming ice and snow. But *Autumn Aurora* never delves into the desolation of prolonged winter. Instead ending this album while its aura is still very autumnal.



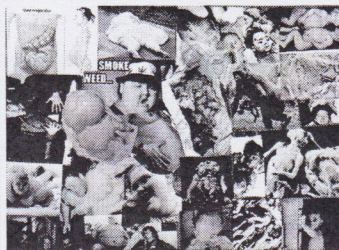


reviews



Bexhill
demo

tape are really solidifying their musical identity. The vocals are spot on and confrontational and have a cool high gain black metal thing going on in the recording. The songs get into many different styles of riffing, different death metal or punk rhythms and those vocals are the continuity that ties it all together and creates one unified sound out of very varied and creative songwriting. "Battlequest" is my favorite track here. That shoulda been the name of the album cause all the songs have the feeling of blood and sweat and physical force. When the album does slow down, which is less often than I remember in their older material, it is devastating and very satisfying. On cassette, self released by the band.



Bloater/ Babytaker split

Excellent follow up after the demo from BABYTAKER and excellent first efforts from BLOATER. This split takes a unique approach. Instead of having one band on side A and the other on side B, the tracks go from one band to the other over and over again. Both bands are on the powerviolent side of hardcore but each band handles things differently. BABYTAKER borders on straight up noisecore. Vocals are divided pretty evenly between gruff yells that keep things in place and high pitched child screams that bring the songs into way weirder territory. The songs are furious and ridiculous and constantly changing. There is rarely a moment

where they give you enough time to bang your head to a certain riff because of the constant punch of stopping on a dime only to rip back into blasts. Sometimes the guitar work is just a fast as fuck punk song and sometimes it's hitting random harmonics and getting real noisy and unpleasant. BLOATER is more booming. On point blasting and wahwahwah pv vocals with plenty of heavy as fuck breaks. But not enough chuggy breaks to make the songwriting predictable. SPAZZ fans for sure. Lots of cool rhythm changes, not just blastblastblast-breakdown-blast. Although that is a tried and true formula that I am not hating on. Both bands are recorded well. Definitely a quality bedroom recording, not too raw and shitty but also not too unraw and unshitty. On cassette, self released by the bands.



Blunt Force
demo

A few years ago, a band from my then neck of the woods called INJUSTICE SYSTEM did a killer split with BLOODTYPE from New Jersey. They were a short lived but furious late 80s style hardcore band. Like youth crew played by raucous straight edge punks. This is a new band with the singer from BLOODTYPE, who also runs the awesome label Bleeding Edges that this tape came out through. This sounds like a sequel to BLOODTYPE, which is great cause they only ever wrote like 15 songs.

The songs on this demo are simple, mid paced and slammable. Sounds like the period in hardcore history where the OG sounds had been in place for a bit and newer harder stuff was emerging. Kinda twangy high-gain guitar tone, instead of crunchy distortion, gives it that stomping basement feel. They cover a DYS song and that band is a perfect example of what

they're going for: Boston in 1984, tough but not too douche, hardcore for hardcore's sake. If BLOODTYPE was a modern NEGATIVE FX, this new band is their LAST RIGHTS. If you are into modern hardcore like URBAN BLIGHT, WASTE MANAGEMENT or BOSTON STRANGLER, then BLUNT FORCE is right up your alley. They've got a guy from NIGHT BIRDS too if that entices you more to check em out. Can't say all that much about the band since this demo is only a couple songs but I like what I hear and I can't wait til they put out some split records so I can hear more cool throwback hardcore bands.



V/A
Bitter Cold Compilation

Great collection of bands from an area that apparently has a really good grindcore scene, which is the northern midwest. The bands are from Illinois, Wisconsin and the surrounding areas and I didn't know this many bands I like are from such a small vicinity. The label says this album was recorded in the winter of 2013/14, "one of the harshest winters ever sustained in the midwest."

The comp opens with MILORGANAUT, who are fucking under rated and I'm not just saying that cause I put out a tape of theirs a while back. Grindviolence. Dissonant razor blade riffs, dual vocal assault. Their drummer is a god of gravity blasting and just fuckin smashes his drums really hard and that's as

poetic as I'm gonna get about that. SICK/TIRED is on the metal side of grindcore, down tuned and low as fuck in the guitar as well as vocals. LIFES is a pretty new two piece and this song was the first thing I've heard since their demo and I'm glad to see they are still tearing shit up. MELLOW HARSHER crams a maddening amount of starts and stops and wild changes into one 46 second song. MACHISMO and GNAWED both contributed total anti-music circuit noise songs to this compilation which is a ballsy move that I give them props for because the songs fit into the whole track list very well. Of all the bands featured, SCAPHE raised my curiosity the most. They remind me of this band I've only heard a handful of times called SUFFERING LUNA. I don't know if that's a useful or relevant reference. Experimental? Still in the realm of the rest of the bands on this record but it deviates from hateful hardcore sludge into a meandering instrumental section that caught me off guard, like a psychedelic MAN IS THE BASTARD or something.

Putting a billion grind bands onto a compilation is certainly a cool idea but I like this approach better - ten tracks, eight bands. And they all sound pretty different from one another if your ears are adjusted to the subtleties of nihilistic chaos. Best song/band is a tie between MILORGANAUT and SICK/TIRED but really there are no duds.

This comp is free to listen to online so check it out and get into some quality new and underexposed grindcore bands.

On 7" vinyl from Diseased Audio Records.



Ultramantis Black
s/t

I don't keep up to date with Relapse Records but I bet this is the best thing they've put out in a minute. The singer and ringleader of this project is an underground pro wrestler named Ultramantis Black and I guess he was a hardcore punk in the 90s or a little after. He is part of the Chikara wrestling circuit which is low budget and full of heart, you should look up some videos.

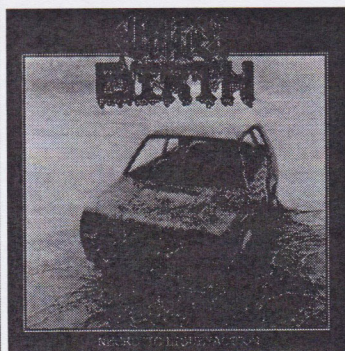
Plenty of different routes could be taken for creating a musical representation for pro wrestling. Stone Cold Steve Austin, for example, would be a burly and ignorant beer drinkin BLOOD FOR BLOOD kind of band. Hulk Hogan and cheesy 80s guys have the tough but homoerotic feel of big hair thrash and

speed metal. The musical version of Ultramantis can get into near INFEST territory, straight up and blistering pissed hardcore. On the other hand there is also a hint of screamo in the slight amount of whining in Ultramantis' vocals when the breakdowns come. The label even compared them to MELT BANANA, which I wouldn't have thought of but yes, sort of. The guitar work is usually a little above average, throwing in a little extra flare and depth than the power chords that could have made this a more mediocre album.

There is a political leaning to the lyrics. The opening sample is a native american speaking about resistance to white invasion and later there is some talk about climate change and CEO's destroying out planet. The last track is "Gloom of Prosperity". It's pretty long and the vocals are mostly spoken, ranting against our advanced culture. But the album is more full of hardcore ragers than it is history and philosophy lessons.

I don't know where this guy came from or how he got a random deal with Relapse, but ULTRAMANTIS BLACK are fuckin heavy
On 12" vinyl from Relapse Records.

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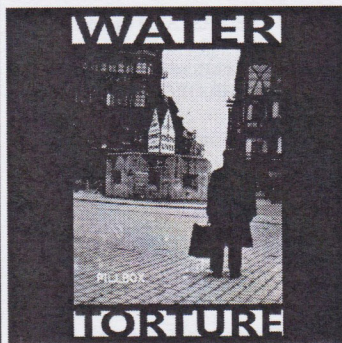


Coffin Birth
Necrotic Liquefaction

Holy shit this is really good! I wanna say that COFFIN BIRTH loves EXCRUCIATING TERROR but that's a lazy description. The vocals are right out of that band though and a lot of that era of scummy LA grindcore, the hands cupped around the mic type of vocals for the most part with screams as the accents. I think the melted car on the record cover might be a not that subtle nod to INSECT WARFARE too. The music is grindcore played the hardcore way not the death metal way, lots of real fast 1-2-1-2 beats that chop and trip over themselves into a steady ratatatat blast. The first hint of any slowing down isn't until track freakin seven. The drummer is as well versed as the two bands I just mentioned and he makes sure this shit doesn't get repetitive. I love grind bands where the

the drummer is the most impressive member and this dude is the bomb. This whole album is heads down fuckin grinding, bombs going off and blast waves hitting you with a thousand tons of force on impact.

COFFIN BIRTH are from somewhere in Australia. That's a huge place but the only other aussie grindcore I know of is THE KILL and I bet they are homies. So hey, guy from THE KILL who does Blastasfuck Records: put this shit out on wax!



Water Torture
Pillbox

These guys are up there on my list of best powerviolence bands of this decade, straight up, and I say that after hearing maybe half of their current discography (they put out a new EP or split record every few weeks). This is the longest recording I have heard from them and I had my doubts that they could fill up a full LP. No disappointment though, they fucking killed it.

An aspect I like about WATER TORTURE is their changes from record to record. Usually subtle, they will focus one record specifically on the shortest 5 second long songs they can while the next record will be more focused on incorporating looping and noise, the next record more slowed down and slugged out, etc. That evolution isn't all that apparent on Pillbox. Instead it is

more of a culmination of everything they've been doing up until now. In an interview in a previous issue of this zine, Matt from WT had said something along the lines of "we only play as fast as possible or as slow as possible, fuck midtempo" (I am paraphrasing). That is a great summary of their songwriting. There are no half assed sloppy riffs or cheater beats that let the drummer slack off on some faster parts. They are just undisputable masters of blasting and they make that very apparent. The gnarly tone of the instruments gives everything a fuzzy almost drugged out feel - this is neither cartoony and wacky nor overly dark and dreary, which seem to be the two options of many similar bands. The bass is low, ripping and real distorted. The vocals shout from the back of the mix rather than being able to hear every single syllable over the music.

I found myself enjoying the small amounts of feedback and pedal noise in each of the first few songs but was wanting some elaboration, so I was pleasantly surprised when I continued listening and found two full on noise tracks on this album which are used as intermissions to tastefully break up the violent grinding, entitled "Product 1" and "Product 2". The longest track called "Creature of Repetition" is also an interesting pause in the destruction: a haunting, droning and reverberated instrumental with no percussion - it sounds like a car crash in slow motion and demands some reflection while listening to it.

Also I didn't notice this until reading some info about the recording but this record has WATER TORTURE as a three piece (2 bass, 1 drums) rather than the usual two guys and after learning that fact I started to appreciate certain points in the songs where the extra member is utilized.

Definitely satisfying for those who have been following this very productive band for their year or two of existence and an excellent introduction to those not in the know. Highly recommended. On 12" vinyl from Nerve Altar Records.



GORCROW demo

Not sure if these guys had any recordings previous to this one but I must say I like these tracks more than the older songs that I've heard live a few times. Not to say those songs weren't cool but these new ones really caught my attention. GORCROW are from Vermont and are a perfect counterpart to their neighbors BEXHILL. I hope those two bands do a split some day because they are perfect on a bill together. These songs sit somewhere between aggressive crust punk and outer space stoner doom metal. The faster, punkier parts are like MASSKONTROL - straight forward and not too choppy or complicated chord progressions over a continuous and galloping d-beat, keeping it quick but with enough room to breath. The slow

often more complex parts are vast and trippy and it didn't surprise me to see this cassette came with a pack of rolling papers with their logo on them. Not that it's cheesy and drug themed or anything but their songs are definitely grasping at a higher level of metal consciousness that smokin a J is helping me climb inside of. That side of the band is best represented in the song "Thujone" which features a slow and soft acoustic guitar intro that leads into crushing but ethereal doom. Beautiful melodies reaching out of the black crust. I am pretty picky when it comes to bands with really long songs cause I get bored fast, so take my word for it that GORCROW are not repetitious or some boring bluesy doom thing. They come off as very dedicated to the music they are making, crafting unique and majestic songs that do not follow any trends or formulas.

On cassette, self released by the band.



MYRKUR s/t

While I was checking out that ULTRAMANTIS band I decided I'd take a listen to another couple of newer albums from Relapse. Some were not very good. MYRKUR was my favorite so I'm gonna review it.

So MYRKUR is a solo project from someone somewhere in Scandinavia. The fact that her debut record is on Relapse makes me think that maybe she is a member of a more prominent metal band and this is a side project? Who knows. This is a beautiful record though. The album opens with layered angelic voices singing with no accompaniment, sounding like a tribal ritual that leads into the black metal bulk of the song. Those majestic voices come in a few times and are serene and glorious when they do, giving an almost religious or sacred feeling which plays well into the evil sounds of the heavier parts of the songs. In fact, those elven choirs are more prominent as a form of vocals than screams. Really, the vocals are the most notable part of this band.

Sometimes there is a big divide between the soft and harsh parts of MYRKUR, as in a quieter singing and synth part followed by thrashing sounds of battle. But it's most impressive when those two moods intersect and create something new altogether. Track 4, "Latvian Beauty" is the best example of this. I don't even know how to describe how awesome these vocal melodies are but I want them sung into my ears on my deathbed. She is doing something similar to ULVER's vocals and very northern sounding melodies but that is too simple an explanation.

Some of the straight forward black parts could be likened to *A Blaze In The North Sky* and the rest of the classics (of course, static tremolo from the guitars, repetition and the couple of beats you'd expect) but the overall approach is very unique. Primal brute force and delicate beauty side by side and sometimes mixed together. Sure other bands have done this, but MYRKUR doesn't really sound like overly atmospheric bands like ALCEST or overly tribal like some neo-pagan Euro black metal bands. The songs are on average about 4 minutes which is cool by me because some black metal bands who are as brooding and ritual sounding as MYRKUR have albums made up of like, three 20 minute long songs and I just can't do it. This is a really cool debut record and a brilliant display of femininity.

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DECAYED RACE S/T

At first listen I wasn't that impressed with this record because, to be honest, it has lots of elements that are common in bleak, black and white hardcore. But I have found myself really digging it over time cause fuck that, I already love hearing those elements in bands that I like right? With the brutal initial notes and the first few syllables sung, you may think that this is going to be full on grindcore but do not be fooled, these guys are more core than grind. There is a low growling vocalist but he is more for accents and stuff. The main singer has a forced guttural shout that comes across as both hateful and desperate. His lyrics are sometimes a commentary on the downsides to our social system and other times just about self struggle but, like

the vocals themselves, they all have the feeling of desperation, really getting to the raw nerves of this songwriter.

Maybe think of a less perfect DEAD LANGUAGE? Or even IRON LUNG, certainly in the vocal patterns and delivery at least. More in common with darker second wave powerviolence (is that even a thing) than the original california bands. No bright colors, jokes or positivity here. And they aren't really obsessed with speed. They are fast or at least very upbeat most of the time, plenty of thrashin but not blastcore. Speed and chaos is used to build the songs as a whole rather than being the sole purpose of the music. Its very full though, very thick, definitely a complete band who are making their instruments as fat and distorted as they can. The final track, "Expressed in Death" fucking destroys the album, riding on a huge breakdown for a few minutes while feedback and hard to decipher samples further the cacophony. And woah, a CHRIST INVERSION cover!



SIXBREW BANTHA Intravenously Commodified LP

The first SBB full length record fucking blew me away a few years ago. I mean fucking blew me away. The guitar work is enough to make any "extreme" musician think less of their own songwriting ability and the vocals spot on and never delivered in a predictable way. If I have to compare SIXBREW BANTHA to another band I think a decent starting point could be ASSUCK. If for no other reason, the deeply thought provoking and non-rhythmic lyrics over chaos metal grind is worthy of that comparison. But their songwriting in general is vaguely ASSUCKian, in that it is really more of a general heavy metal or death metal feel, not what 2014 would consider to be pure grindcore.

Between that LP and this LP, the band put out four or five splits with some very killer bands and they show no signs of running out of steam. All the riffs on this are just as inspired and jaw dropping as when I first heard the band. Drums are virtuosic, throwing in insanely epic fills between beats. I almost hesitate to go into too much detail because I truly can not sum up how well SBB capture the feeling that grindcore is meant to express. Fuck! Many reviews for all sorts of punk and metal records will be positive but say something like "they aren't reinventing the wheel, but it's good", and while bands who fit into a mold will always have their place as carrying on certain traditions and reliving the feeling of old bands, SIXBREW BANTHA are actually breaking new ground.

I really have to reinforce how good these lyrics are too, when you consider how difficult it is to lyrically discuss subjects like banking, government surveillance and other similarly ripe social issues without sounding immature, uninformed or like some street punk loser. I love this record and other grind and metal musicians should be studying it.

On 12" vinyl from SPHC and To Live A Lie (a team up of labels that should tell you this rules).

